

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-10

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INFO USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 07060

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PARM, CW, US

SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTRY REACTIONS TO RECENT LEBER-
SCHLESINGER TALKS

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH MINISTER
LEBER'S PERSONAL AIDE AND OFFICERS ON THE MOD POLICY AND
OPERATIONS STAFF, WE WERE TOLD THAT THE MINISTER WAS
HIGHLY PLEASED WITH HIS CONVERSATIONS APRIL 17 AT
FUERSTENFELDBRUCK WITH SECRETARY SCHLESINGER. LEBER
THOUGHT THE MEETING WAS VALUABLE FOR PERSONAL AS WELL AS
PROFESSIONAL REASONS, AND HOPES THE MEETING ESTABLISHED
A BETTER BASIS FOR CLOSER WORKING RELATIONS WITH
SECRETARY SCHLESINGER ON THE WHOLE RANGE OF US AND FRG
DEFENSE AND SECURITY PROBLEMS. DETAILS FOLLOW. END
SUMMARY.

1. OUR CONTACTS MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS ABOUT SOME
OF THE SUBSTANTIVE POINTS OF THE FUERSTENFELDBRUCK CON-
VERSATIONS. ONE OF LEBER'S CENTRAL CONCERNS REMAINS
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THAT THE EUROPEANS WILL RELAX THEIR DEFENSE EFFORTS AS

THEY SEEK DETENTE WITH THE EAST AND HE HOPES TO USE CLOSE AND FREQUENT CONSULTATIONS WITH SECRETARY SCHLESINGER TO KEEP AN EYE ON ANY PROBLEMS IN THIS REGARD. LEBER EXPECTS TO DISCUSS COMMON APPROACHES TO BOTH DPC AND NPG AGENDA ITEMS WITH THE SECRETARY WHEN HE VISITS WASHINGTON LATER THIS MONTH. THE MOD STAFF MENTIONED, HOWEVER, THAT LEBER DOES NOT WANT THE IMPRESSION TO ARISE IN NATO THAT HE AND SECRETARY SCHLESINGER ARE "GANGING UP" TO PUSH THROUGH PROPOSALS OVER THE HEADS OF THEIR COLLEAGUES. NEVERTHELESS, LEBER IS WORRIED ABOUT THE EROSION IN DEFENSE EFFORTS IN BELGIUM, THE-NETHERLANDS AND DENMARK; HIS FEARS ARE GREATER NOW BECAUSE HE THINKS UK AND ITALIAN GOVERNMENT INSTABILITY IS LIKELY TO FURTHER UNDERMINE NATO STRENGTH.

2. IN OUR TALKS WITH FMOD OFFICIALS, WE HAVE FOUND THEY CLEARLY RECOGNIZE THE NEED TO MAKE HARDWARE IMPROVEMENTS IN NATO FORCES, BUT THEY QUESTION WHETHER IN-DEPTH DISCUSSIONS OF STRATEGIC CONCEPTS WOULD BE PROFITABLE. THEIR ATTITUDE SEEMS TO BE DETERMINED BY AN UNDERLYING FEAR THAT ANY DISCUSSION OF NATO STRATEGY, UNLESS IT IS COUCHED IN WHOLLY FAMILIAR TERMS, SOMEHOW MAY LEAD TO AN UNDERMINING OF THE US NUCLEAR COMMITMENT. WE CANNOT TELL HOW MUCH OF THE MOD STAFF'S UNEASINESS HAS BEEN COMMUNICATED TO MINISTER LEBER, BUT IT IS CLEAR WE SHOULD PURSUE A DISCUSSION OF STRATEGIC CONCEPTS TO MAKE CLEAR OUR VIEWS AND REMOVE ANY LINGERING DOUBTS IN GERMAN MINDS ABOUT WHAT PRECISELY WE HAVE IN MIND.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE HAVE FOUND MOD AND FONOFF OFFICIALS HAVE AN ACCURATE GRASP OF SECRETARY SCHLESINGER'S RECENT STATEMENTS ON STRATEGIC FORCES, AND PARTICULARLY ON THE RETARGETING MATTER. THEY ARE CONVINCED THAT RETARGETING HAS ADDED A HIGHLY USEFUL ELEMENT OF FLEXIBILITY TO WESTERN STRATEGY. THESE FAVORABLE ATTITUDES WERE LARGELY, WE UNDERSTAND, THE RESULT OF SECRETARY SCHLESINGER'S STRATEGIC BRIEFING AT THE LAST NPB MEETING WHICH PREPARED EUROPEANS FOR HIS REMARKS AT THE OVERSEAS WRITERS CLUB LAST JANUARY.

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4. ON OTHER ITEMS, WE WERE TOLD THAT ALTHOUGH MINISTER LEBER WHOLEHEARTEDLY SYMPATHIZES WITH OUR POSITION ON THE 2-4ATAF PROBLEM, HE WILL PROBABLY BE UNWILLING TO RISK MUCH POLITICAL CAPITAL WITH THE UK AND DUTCH BY VIGOROUSLY SUPPORTING OUR PROPOSALS. IN THE SAME WAY HE RECOGNIZES THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN THE NORTHAG AREA, BUT WE HAVE THE IMPRESSION HE WILL LEAVE THE INITIATIVE

TO US TO BRING ABOUT IMPROVEMENTS. THE MOD STAFF TOLD US THAT LEBER IS IN FACT MORE ALARMED ABOUT THE WEAKNESS OF CENTAG'S SOUTHERN FLANK, ESPECIALLY THE DANUBE APPROACHES, AND THAT HE WISHES TO PURSUE THAT TOPIC AT GREATER LENGTH WITH SECRETARY SCHLESINGER. IN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 07060

LIMDIS

ADDITION, SINCE HIS LAST TALKS WITH GALLEY, LEBER NOW BELIEVES THERE IS LESS LIKELIHOOD THAN EVER THAT FRENCH FORCES WILL BE EVENTUALLY AVAILABLE FOR RAPID EMPLOYMENT IN THE GDP, AND THIS WILL LIMIT CENTAG'S FLEXIBILITY IN DEALING WITH THE FLANK PROBLEM. IN THIS REGARD THE MOD STAFF TAKES MORE OR LESS AT FACE VALUE GALLEY'S STATEMENTS THAT PARIS WILL EVENTUALLY ORGANIZE A "NUCLEAR ARMY." IN THEIR OPINION, SUCH A DEVELOPMENT WOULD PERMANENTLY REMOVE THE FFA FROM ANY EVENTUAL REINTEGRATION WITHIN THE NATO MILITARY STRUCTURE, FOR THE FRENCH ARMY WOULD HAVE LITTLE OR NO CAPACITY FOR CONVENTIONAL RESPONSE, HENCE EXCLUDING IT FROM 14/3 STRATEGY

5. FINALLY, WE UNDERSTAND MINISTER LEBER HOPES THAT

SECRETARY SCHLESINGER WILL BE ABLE TO PAY AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO BONN SOMETIME IN THE REASONABLY NEAR FUTURE. LEBER WARMLY WELCOMED THE SECRETARY'S VISIT AT FUERSTENFELDBRUCK, BUT HOPES A MORE OFFICIAL VISIT CAN BE ARRANGED JUDGING THAT A FORMAL VISIT IN BONN WOULD CLEARLY DEMONSTRATE THE CLOSENESS OF US-FRG DEFENSE RELATIONS.

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